LETTER TO FRANQUIÈRES

Letter to Franquières

Rousseau to Laurent Aymon de Franquières[1]

Here it is, Sir, this wretched babble that my humiliated amour-propre has made you await so long, for lack of feeling that a much nobler amour-propre should have taught me to surmount the other. What does it matter that my verbosity appear wretched to you, provided that I be content with the sentiment which dictated it to me? As soon as my improved condition restored some strength to me, I profited from it to reread it and send it to you. If you have the courage to go all the way to the end, I beg you afterward kindly return it to me, without saying anything to me about what you thought of it, and which I understand more than enough. I salute you, Sir, and embrace you with all my heart.

Renou[2]

Monquin, 25 March 1769

Rousseau to Laurent Aymon de Franquières

Bourgoin, 15 January 1769

I feel, Sir, the uselessness of the duty I am fulfilling in answering your last letter: but after all it is a duty that you are imposing on me and I gladly fulfill it though badly, given the distractions of the condition in which I am.

My design in telling you my opinion here concerning the principle points of your letter is to tell it to you with simplicity and without seeking to make you adopt it.[3] That would be against my principles and even against my taste. For I am just; and as I do not at all like someone to seek to subjugate me, I do not seek to subjugate anyone either. I know that common reason is very limited, that as soon as one departs from its narrow bounds, each has his own which belongs only to himself, that opinions are propagated by opinions, not by reason, and that whoever yields to someone else's reasoning, something already quite rare, yields by prejudice, authority, affection, or laziness; rarely, perhaps never, by his own judgment.[4]

You point out to me, Sir, that the result of your inquiries concerning

the author of things is a state of doubt. I am unable to judge concerning this state, because it has never been my own. I believed in my childhood by authority, in my youth by sentiment, in my mature age by reason; now I believe because I have always believed. While my extinguished memory no longer puts me back on the path of my reasonings, while my enfeebled power of judging no longer permits me to begin them anew, the opinions which resulted from them remain with me in all their force; and without having the will nor the courage for putting them into deliberation once again, I adhere to them confidently and conscientiously, certain of having, in the vigor of my judgment, brought to their discussion all the attention and good faith of which I was capable. If I have been mistaken, it is not my fault, but nature's, which did not give my head a greater measure of intelligence and reason. I have no more today; I have much less. On what foundation, therefore, would I begin to deliberate again? The moment is pressing; the departure is drawing near. I would never have the time nor the strength to finish the great work of a recasting. Allow that in any event I bear away with me the consistency and firmness of a man, and not the discouraging and timid doubts of an old babbler.

With respect to what I can recall of my former ideas, with respect to what I perceive concerning the movement of your own, I see that not having followed the same path in our inquiries, it is hardly surprising that we should not have arrived at the same conclusion. Weighing the proofs for the existence of God with the difficulties, you have found none of the sides sufficiently preponderant for you to decide, and you have remained in doubt. That is not the way I proceeded. I examined all the systems concerning the formation of the universe that I was able to get to know; I meditated on those I could imagine. I compared them all as best I could: and I made up my mind, not for the one which offered me no difficulties at all, for they all offered me some, but for the one which seemed to me to have the fewest. I told myself that these difficulties were in the nature of the thing, that the contemplation of the infinite would always surpass the limits of my understanding, that, being obliged never to hope to conceive fully the system of nature, all I could do was to consider it from the sides that I could grasp, that it was necessary to know how not to know in peace all the rest; and I admit that in these inquiries I thought as do the folk of whom you speak who do not reject a clear or sufficiently proven truth on account of the difficulties which accompany it, and which one could not remove. I then had, I admit, such a bold confidence, or at least such a strong persuasion, that I would have defied every philosopher to propose any other intelligible system concerning nature, to which I could not have opposed stronger, more invincible objections than those he could oppose

to me about my own; and then it was necessary to resolve myself to remain without believing anything as you do, which did not depend on me, or to reason badly, or to believe as I have done.

An idea which came to me thirty years ago has perhaps contributed more than any other to make me unshakable.[5] Let us suppose, I said to myself, mankind having grown old until this day in the most complete materialism, without an idea of divinity or of soul having ever entered into any human mind. Let us suppose that philosophical atheism had exhausted all its systems for explaining the formation and the working of the universe solely by the interplay of matter and necessary motion, an expression about which, moreover, I have never comprehended anything.[6] In this condition, sir, excuse my frankness, I further supposed what I have always seen, and what I felt must be, that instead of resting tranquilly in these systems, as in the bosom of the truth, their restless partisans incessantly sought to speak about their doctrine, to clarify it, to extend it, to explain it, to palliate it, to correct it, and like someone who feels the house he inhabits trembling under his feet, to shore it up with new arguments. Let us finally end these suppositions by that of a Plato, of a Clarke, who rising suddenly in their midst, had said to them: My friends, if you had begun the analysis of this universe by that of yourselves, you would have found in the nature of your being the key to the constitution of this same universe that you seek in vain without it.[7] Then explaining to them the distinction between the two substances, he would have proven to them by the very properties of matter that, whatever Locke may say about it, the supposition of matter thinking is a genuine absurdity.[8] He would have made them see what is the nature of a truly active and thinking being, and from the establishment of this being who judges, he would have finally ascended again to the confused, but sure, notions of the Supreme being:[9] who can doubt that, struck by the brilliance, the simplicity, the truth, the beauty of this entrancing idea, mortals until then blind, enlightened by the first rays of the divinity, would have offered to it by acclamation their first homage, and that thinkers above all and philosophers would have blushed for having contemplated for so long the exteriors of this immense machine, without finding, without even suspecting the key to its constitution, and always crudely limited by their senses, for never having known how to see anything but matter where everything showed them that another Substance gave life to the universe and intelligence to man. It is then, sir, that the fashion would have been favorable to this new philosophy, that the young and the wise would have found themselves in agreement, that a doctrine so beautiful, so sublime, so mild, and so consoling for every just man would have really stirred all men to virtue, and that

this fair word "humanity," now reduced to the point of insipidity, to the point of ridicule, by people the least humane in the world, would have been more impressed in hearts than in books. A simple transposition of time would then have sufficed for reversing the path of philosophical fashion, with this difference, that the fashion of today, despite its glittering words, does not promise us a very respectable generation, nor very virtuous philosophers.

You object, Sir, that if God had wanted to oblige men to know him, he would have placed his existence in evidence before all eyes. It is for those who make faith in God a dogma necessary for salvation to answer this objection, and they answer it by revelation. As for me, who believes in God without believing this faith to be necessary, I do not see why God would put himself under the obligation to give it to us. I think that everyone will be judged not concerning what he has believed, but concerning what he has done; and I do not at all believe that a doctrinal system is necessary for works, because the conscience takes this doctrine's place.

I well believe, it is true, that it is necessary to be of good faith in one's belief, and not to make from it a system favorable to our passions. Since we are not all intelligence, we cannot philosophize with so much disinterestedness that our will does not have a little influence over our opinions. One can often judge concerning the secret inclinations of a man by his purely speculative sentiments;[10] and that being posited, I think it could well be that someone who has not wanted to believe might be punished for not having believed.

Nevertheless, I believe that God has sufficiently revealed Himself to men both by his works and in their hearts, and if there are any who do not know him, according to me this is because they do not want to know him or because they have no need of it.

In this latter case is the savage and uncultivated man who has not yet made any use of his reason, who, governed only by his appetites, has no need of any other guide, and who, following only nature's instinct, advances by movements that are always right.[11] This man does not know God, but he does not offend him. In the other case, on the contrary, is the philosopher who, by dint of wanting to exalt his intelligence, of refining, of splitting hairs over what was thought prior to him at last unsettles all the axioms of simple and primitive reason, and for wanting always to know more and better than others arrives at knowing nothing at all.[12] The man who is simultaneously reasonable and modest, whose practiced but confined understanding feels its limits and keeps within them, finds in these limits the notion of his soul and that of the author of his being, without being able to pass beyond in order to render these notions clear and

to contemplate so closely the one and the other as if he were himself a pure mind. Then seized by respect he stops, and does not touch the veil, content to know that the immense Being is underneath.[13] This is as far as philosophy is useful for practice; the remainder is no more than an idle speculation for which man was not made at all, from which the moderate reasoner abstains, and into which the common man does not enter at all. This man, who is neither a brute nor a prodigy, is man properly speaking, the mean between the two extremes, and who comprises nineteen twentieths of Mankind. It is for this numerous class to sing the Psalm *Coeli enerrant*, and this is the one indeed which does sing it.[14] All the peoples of the earth know and adore God, and though each one dresses him up according to its fashion, yet beneath all these diverse raiments one always finds God. The small number of elite who have higher demands about doctrine, and whose genius does not confine itself to common sense, wants a more transcendent one, this is not for what I blame it: But that it should go from there to put itself in the place of mankind and say that God has hidden Himself[15] from men because it, the small number, no longer sees him, I find that in this it is wrong. It can happen, I agree, that the stream of fashion and the play of intrigue might expand the philosophical sect and persuade the multitude for a moment that it no longer believes in God. But this transient fashion cannot last, and however one proceeds, it will always be necessary in the long run to have a God for man. Finally, if by straining the nature of things the divinity would increase in evidence for us, I do not doubt that the new Lyceum would increase by the same ratio the subtlety for denying it. In the long run reason takes the bent that the heart gives to it; and when one wants to think about everything otherwise than the people do, one arrives at the end sooner or later.

All this, sir, hardly seems philosophic to you, or to me. But always in good faith with myself, I feel joined to my reasonings, however simple they may be, the weight of interior assent.[16] You want it to be distrusted; I could not think like you on this point, and on the contrary, I find in this internal judgment a natural safeguard against the sophisms of my reason. I even fear that on this occasion you are confusing the secret penchants of our heart which lead us astray, with this even more secret, more internal, *dictamen* which entreats and murmurs against these self-interested decisions, and leads us back in spite of ourselves onto the road of the truth.[17] This interior sentiment is that of nature itself; it is an appeal on its part against the sophisms of reason, and what proves it is that it never speaks more strongly than when our will yields the most obligingly to judgments that this sentiment persists in rejecting. Far from believing that whoever judges according to it is subject to being mistaken, I believe that it never

misleads us and that it is the light of our feeble understanding, when we want to go beyond what we are able to conceive.

And after all, how many times is not philosophy itself, with all its pride, forced to have recourse to this internal judgment that it affects to despise. Was it not this alone which made Diogenes walk as his only reply before Zeno who was denying movement?[18] Was it not by this that all philosophical antiquity responded to the pyrrhonists?[19] Let us not go so far: while all of modern philosophy rejects spirits, suddenly Bishop Berkley arises and maintains there is no body. How has anyone managed to respond to this fearsome logician?[20] Remove the interior sentiment, and I challenge all modern philosophers together to prove to Berkley that there are bodies. Good young man, who seems to me so well born, some good faith I implore you, and allow me to cite you here an author who will not be suspect to you, the author of the *Philosophic Thoughts*.[21] Let a man come to you to say that casting at random a multitude of letters from the printing shop, he saw the *Aeneid* all arranged result from this throw. Allow that instead of going to verify this marvel, you would answer him coldly: Sir, that is not impossible, but you are lying. By virtue of what, I pray you, will you answer him thus?

Well who does not know that without the internal sentiment, there would soon remain no traces of truth on earth, that we would all be successively the playthings of the most monstrous opinions, to the extent that those who would uphold them had more genius, skill, and wit, and that finally reduced to blushing at our very reason, we would soon no longer know what to believe nor to think.

But the objections. . . . No doubt there are insoluble ones for us and many, I know. But once more, give me a system where there are none, or tell me how I ought to decide. Even more, by the nature of my system, provided that my direct proofs are well established, the difficulties should not detain me, given the impossibility where I am, I a composite being, of reasoning exactly concerning pure minds and for observing sufficiently the nature of them. But you materialists, who speak to me of a single, palpable substance, subjected by its nature to the inspection of the senses, you are obliged, not only to tell me nothing but what is clear, well proven, but to resolve all my difficulties in a wholly satisfying way, because we possess, you and I, all the instruments necessary for this solution. And, for example, when you make thought issue from combinations of matter, you must show me through the senses these combinations and their result by the laws of physics and mechanics alone, since you acknowledge no others. You Epicurean, you make up the soul from subtle atoms. But what do you call "subtle," I pray you? You know that we do not know any absolute di-

mensions, and that nothing is small or large except relatively to the eye which looks at it. I assume that I take an adequate microscope and look at one of your atoms. I see a large piece of crooked rock. From the play and hooking up of such pieces, I am waiting to see thought result. You Modernist, you show me an organic molecule. I take my microscope, and I see a dragon as big as half my room: I am waiting to see such dragons shaping and twisting themselves until what I see resulting from the whole is a being not only organic but intelligent, that is to say a being that is rigorously one, etc., and not an aggregation.[22] You might indicate to me, Sir, that the world was arranged by chance, like the Roman Republic. For the comparison to be precise, it would be necessary for the Roman Republic not to have been composed of men, but of pieces of wood. Show me clearly and through the senses the purely material generation of the first intelligent being; I ask nothing more of you.

But if all is the work of an intelligent, powerful, and beneficent being, from where does the evil on earth derive?[23] I admit to you that this so terrible a difficulty has never struck me very much, either because I have not conceived it well, or because in fact it does not have all the solidity it appears to have. Our philosophers have risen up against metaphysical entities, and I know no one who fabricates so many of them. What do they understand by "evil"? What is "evil" in itself? Where is "evil" relative to nature and to its Author?[24] The Universe subsists; order reigns there and is preserved there; everything perishes in succession there, because such is the law of material and moved beings. But all is renewed there and nothing degenerates there, because such is the order of its author, and this order does not contradict itself. I do not see any evil in all that. But when I suffer, is this not an evil? When I die, is this not an evil? Not so fast: I am subject to death, because I received life. There was for me only one means for not dying; it was to have never been born. Life is a positive but finite good, whose limit is called death. The limit of the positive is not the negative; it is zero. Death is terrible for us, and we call this terror evil. Pain is also an evil for the one who suffers, I agree. But pain and pleasure were the only means for attaching a sensitive and perishable being to its own conservation, and these means are managed with a goodness worthy of the Supreme Being. At the very moment that I am writing this I have just experienced again how much the sudden cessation of a sharp pain is a keen and delightful pleasure. Would anyone dare tell me that the cessation of the keenest pleasure is a sharp pain? The sweet enjoyment of life is permanent; to taste it, it is sufficient not to suffer. Pain is only an importunate but necessary warning, that this good which is so dear to us is in peril. When I looked closely at all that, I found, perhaps I proved, that the senti-

ment of death and that of pain is almost nil in the order of nature. It is men who have sharpened it. Without their senseless refinements, without their barbarous institutions, physical evils would hardly reach us, would hardly affect us, and we would not feel death at all.[25]

But the morally evil! another work of man, in which God has no part other than of having made him free, and in this respect similar to himself. Will it then be necessary to blame God for the crimes of men and for the evils that they draw to them? On seeing a field of battle, will it be necessary to reproach him for having created so many broken legs and arms?[26]

Why, you will say, was man made free, since he must abuse his freedom? Ah, Monsieur de Franquières, if ever there existed a mortal who did not abuse it, this mortal alone honors humanity more than all the scoundrels who cover the earth degrade it. My God! give me some virtues and place me one day near the likes of Fenelon, Cato, Socrates.[27] What will the rest of mankind matter to me? I shall not blush for having been a man.

I have told you, Sir, here it concerns my sentiment, not my proofs, and you see it only too well. I remember having formerly encountered on my way this question of the origin of evil, and of having touched it lightly;[28] but you have not read these constant repetitions, and as for me, I have forgotten them: we have both of us done very well. All I know is that the facility that I had for resolving them came from the opinion that I have always had of the eternal coexistence of two principles:[29] the one active, which is God, the other passive, which is matter, which the active being combines and modifies with a complete power, but yet without having created it and without being able to destroy it. This opinion caused me to be jeered at by the philosophers to whom I told it: They judged it absurd and contradictory. That may be, but it did not appear so to me, and I found in it the advantage of explaining without difficulty and clearly to my liking so many questions in which they get entangled; among others the one which you have proposed to me here as insoluble.

Besides, I dare believe that my sentiment, weighing[30] little on every other matter, must do so a little on this one, and when you are better acquainted with my fate, some day you will perhaps say in thinking of me: who else has the right to augment the measure he has found of the evils that man suffers here below?

You attribute to the difficulty of this same question, which fanaticism and superstition have abused, the evils that religions have caused on earth. That may be, and I admit to you even that all formulas in matters of faith appear to me as only so many chains of iniquity, falsehood, hypocrisy, and tyranny. But let us never be unjust, and in order to give the evil more gravity let us not remove the good. To root out all belief in God from the heart

of man is to destroy all virtue there. This is my opinion, Sir. Perhaps it is false; but as long as it is mine I shall not be so cowardly as to dissemble it to you.

To do good is the sweetest occupation of a well-born man. His probity, his beneficence, are not at all the work of his principles, but that of his good-naturedness. He yields to his inclinations in practicing justice, as the wicked yields to his in practicing iniquity. To satisfy the taste which brings us to do good is goodness, but not virtue.[31]

This word virtue signifies "strength."[32] There is no virtue at all without struggle; there is none without victory. Virtue does not consist merely in being just, but in being so by triumphing over one's passions, by ruling over one's own heart. Titus rendering the people of Rome happy, distributing favors and benefits everywhere, might not waste a single day and still not be virtuous. He certainly was so in rejecting Berenice. Brutus having his children die might have been only just. But Brutus was a tender father; in order to do his duty he lacerated his insides, and Brutus was virtuous.[33]

You see here in advance the question restored to its place. This divine simulacrum of which you speak to me offers itself to me under an image which is not ignoble, and I believe I feel, by the impression this image makes within my heart, the warmth it is capable of producing. But in the end this simulacrum is still only one of those metaphysical entities out of which you do not want men to make Gods for themselves. It is a pure object of contemplation. How far do you take the effect of this sublime contemplation? If you only want to draw from it a new encouragement for doing good, I agree with you; but that is not what is at issue. Let us suppose your decent heart preyed upon by the most terrible passions, from which you are not immune, since in the end you are a man. This image, which in tranquility is depicted as so entrancing, will it lose nothing of its charms and will it not wane in the midst of the torrent? Let us set aside the discouraging and terrible supposition of the perils which can tempt virtue driven to despair. Let us suppose only that too sensitive a heart burns with an involuntary love for the daughter or the wife of his friend, that he be the master of enjoying her between heaven, which sees nothing of it, and himself who wishes to say nothing about it to anyone; that her charming shape, adorned by all the attractions of beauty and voluptuousness, entices him. At the moment when his intoxicated senses are ready to yield themselves to their delights, will this abstract image of virtue come to dispute over his heart with the real object which strikes it?[34] Will it appear as most beautiful to him at this moment? Will it wrest him from the arms of the one he loves to give himself over to the vain contemplation of a phantom he knows to be unreal? Will he end like Joseph, and will he leave his

cloak?[35] No, Sir, he will close his eyes and succumb. The believer, you will say, will succumb as well. Yes, the weak man; the one, for example, who is writing to you: but give them both the same degree of strength, and see the difference in the fulcrum.

What are the means, Sir, of resisting violent temptations when one can yield to them without fear while saying to oneself, what is the good of resisting? To be virtuous, the philosopher needs to be so in the eyes of men; but under the eyes of God the just man is quite strong.[36] He counts this life and its goods and evils and all its vainglory for such a little thing! He perceives so much beyond! Invincible strength of virtue, no one knows you except he who feels all his being, and who knows it is not in the power of men to dispose of it.[37] Do you sometimes read Plato's *Republic*? See in the second dialogue with what energy Socrates' friend, whose name I have forgotten, depicts to him the just man beaten down by the outrages of fortune and by the injustices of men, calumnied, persecuted, tormented, a prey to all the disgrace for crime and deserving all the rewards for virtue, already seeing death approaching, and certain that the hatred of the wicked will not spare his memory, when they can do no more to his person. What a discouraging scene, if anything could discourage virtue. Socrates himself, appalled, cries out and believes himself obliged to invoke the Gods before answering; but without the hope of another life, he would have answered badly for this one.[38] Yet, should everything end for us with death, which cannot be if God is just, and consequently if he exists, the idea alone of this existence would still be for man an encouragement to virtue and a consolation in his miseries, which are lacking to the one who, believing himself isolated in this universe, feels at the bottom of his heart no confidant for his thoughts. It is always soothing in adversity to have a witness that one has not deserved it; it is a pride truly worthy of virtue to be able to say to God: Thou who readest in my heart, thou seest that I use, in a strong soul and as a just man, the freedom that thou hast given me. The true believer, who feels himself everywhere under the eternal eye, likes to honor himself in the face of heaven for having fulfilled his duties on earth.[39]

You see that I have not disputed with you over this simulacrum that you have presented to me as the unique object of the virtues of the wise. But, my dear Sir, return now to yourself, and see how much this object is uncombinable, is incompatible, with your principles. How do you not feel that this same law of necessity which alone rules, according to you, the proceeding of the world and all events, also rules all the actions of men, all the thoughts in their heads, all the feelings in their hearts, that nothing is free, that everything is forced, necessary, inevitable, that all the move-

ments of man, directed by blind matter, depend on his will only because his will itself depends on necessity; that consequently there are neither virtues, nor vices, neither merit, nor demerit, nor morality in human actions and that these words, decent man or scoundrel, ought to be entirely devoid of sense for you. Yet, they are not, I am quite sure of it. Your decent heart, in spite of your arguments, protests against your dismal philosophy. The sentiment of freedom, the charm of virtue, make themselves felt by you in spite of yourself, and this is how on all sides this strong and salutary voice of the interior sentiment recalls to the bosom of the truth and of virtue every man whose badly conducted reason leads astray. Bless, Sir, this holy and beneficent voice which leads you back to the duties of man that the philosophy in fashion would end by making you forget. Do not abandon yourself to your arguments except when you feel them in agreement with the *dictamen* of your conscience, and every time that you feel a contradiction there, be sure that it is your arguments that deceive you.

Although I do not wish to quibble with you, nor to follow your two letters step by step, I cannot, however, deny myself saying a word concerning the parallel of the wise Hebrew and the wise Greek.[40] As an admirer of the one and the other, I can hardly be suspected of prejudices in speaking of them. I do not believe you to be in the same circumstance. I am scarcely surprised that you give all the advantage to the second.[41] You have not adequately made acquaintance with the other, and you have not taken adequate care to disentangle what is truly his own, from what is foreign to him and which disfigures him in your eyes, as in those of many other people who, according to me, have not looked more closely there than you have. If Jesus had been born in Athens, and Socrates in Jerusalem, if Plato and Xenophon had written the life of the first, Luke and Matthew that of the other, you would change your language a good deal, and what does him harm in your mind is precisely what renders his elevation of soul more astonishing and more admirable, namely his birth in Judea among the most abject people which perhaps then existed, whereas Socrates, born among the most instructed and most likeable, found all the help he needed for elevating himself easily to the tone that he took.[42] He rose up against the sophists as did Jesus against the Priests, with this difference that Socrates often imitated his adversaries and that if his noble and gentle death had not honored his life, he would have passed for a sophist like them. As for Jesus, the sublime flight taken by his great soul always raised him above all mortals, and from the age of twelve until the moment he expired, in the cruelest as well as in the most degrading of all deaths, he did not contradict himself for a moment. His noble project was to raise up his people again, to make it once again a free people and worthy of being so;

for it was from there that it was necessary to begin. The profound study he made of the Law of Moses, his efforts for reawakening in hearts enthusiasm and love for it, showed his purpose as much as was possible for not alarming the Romans. But his abject and cowardly compatriots, instead of listening to him, acquired a hatred for him precisely because of his genius and his virtue, which recalled to them their own unworthiness. In the end, it was only after having seen the impossibility of executing his project that he extended it in his head, and that, unable by himself to make a revolution among his people, he wanted to make one, through his disciples, in the Universe.[43] What prevented him from succeeding in his first plan, in addition to the baseness of his people incapable of every virtue, was the too great gentleness of his own character, a gentleness which is more akin to an angel and a God than to a man, which did not abandon him for an instant, even on the cross, and which causes streams of tears to be shed by whoever knows how to read his life as it must be read, through the rubbish by which these poor folk have disfigured it. Fortunately they respected and transcribed faithfully his speeches which they did not understand. Remove some oriental or badly rendered turns of phrase and one does not see a word there which would not be worthy of him; and it is there that one recognizes the divine man, who, out of such pitiful disciples, nonetheless made, in their crude but proud enthusiasm, some eloquent and courageous men.[44]

You object to me that he performed miracles. This objection would be terrible if it were just. But you know, Sir, or at least you might know that, according to me, far from Jesus having performed miracles, he declared very positively that he would not perform any, and indicated a very great scorn for those who asked for any.[45]

How many things would remain for me to say! But this letter is enormous. It is necessary to finish. This is the last time that I shall return to these matters. I wanted to gratify you, Sir, I do not at all repent for it; on the contrary. I thank you for having made me take up again a thread of ideas almost erased, but whose remains can have their use for me in the condition in which I am.

Adieu, Sir; remember sometimes a man whom you would have loved, I flatter myself, had you known him better, and who occupied himself with you in some moments in which one is hardly occupied except with oneself.[46]

LETTER TO FRANQUIÈRES

1. First published in the *Œuvres posthumes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Neuchâtel, chez Samuel Fauché, 1782), this letter was apparently intended by Rousseau to ap-

pear in the edition of his collected writings. Although the original letter is lost, the Bibliothèque de la Ville de Neuchâtel possesses a manuscript copy (Lettres de J.-J. Rousseau, A-H, MsR 283, f. 149–154) written partly in Rousseau's hand and partly in the hand of a secretary, with corrections inserted by Rousseau. Early editions did not identify the addressee of the letter, and until the edition by Pierre-Maurice Masson in 1914 (*La Profession de Foi du Vicaire Savoyard*, App. V, 513–526), all earlier publications relied on the faulty 1782 edition. Ralph Leigh, in his critical edition of the *Correspondance complète de Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (The Voltaire Foundation, Oxford, 1980), Tome XXXVII, 13–27, identifies the addressee for the first time as Laurent Aymon de Franquières (1744–1790), a young nobleman from the Dauphiné who, following the family tradition, was received as a member of the council to the Parlement of Grenoble in 1766, but apparently without ever actually assuming the duties of this office. Traveling often, he is reported as visiting Voltaire at Ferney, near Geneva, in 1771.

2. Upon returning to France from England in 1767, Rousseau was still under a mandate of arrest for the publication of *Emile* and the *Social Contract*. Advised by his friend the Prince de Conti to live under an assumed name, Rousseau took the name of Renou (Letter to the Marquis de Mirabeau, June 24, 1767, in Leigh, Vol. 33, 170–171). In 1770 Rousseau was again allowed to live openly in Paris, on the condition that he no longer publish on religion or politics.

3. Compare the beginning of the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" in *Emile*, Bloom edition, 266.

4. Compare *Reveries*, Eighth Walk, p. 77 above.

5. Thirty years before writing this letter Rousseau had not yet left Chambéry for Paris and would have been approximately the same age as Franquières. Rousseau thus disregards the "vision of Vincennes" (1749), which he describes elsewhere as the decisive moment shaping his life and thought. See Rousseau's "Letter to Malesherbes," January 12, 1762, in *Collected Writings*, Vol. 5, 575–576; and *Confessions*, Book VIII, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 5, 294–295.

6. For an example of this sort of discussion, see Diderot, *Pensées Philosophiques*, XVIII and XXI.

7. On Samuel Clarke (1675–1729), see *Emile*, Bloom edition, 269, and Roger Masters, "Rousseau and the Illustrious Clarke," in Michel Launay, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et son temps* (Paris: Librairie A.-G. Nizet, 1969), 37–50. Author of the *Discourses Concerning the Being and the Attributes of God* (1706), Clarke was a friend and follower of Newton, but a critic of Locke and of materialism. See also *The Leibniz–Clarke Correspondence*, H. G. Alexander ed. (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1978).

8. See Locke's discussion in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, IV.3, sec. 6. The possibility of accounting for thought in terms of the explanation of matter and the laws of necessary motion was a central issue of the Enlightenment. See also Voltaire, *Lettres anglaises*, XIII. Rousseau addresses the issue concisely in the first draft of *Emile* (Manuscript Favre, Pléiade, IV, 217–220) and extensively throughout the final version.

9. The capitalization of *supreme* appears in the manuscript but not in the Pléiade edition. While the word "notion" appears as plural in the Pléiade, it appears as singular but incorrectly as masculine and with plural adjectives in the manuscript: "*au notion confuses mais Sures de l'être Suprême*."

10. On this point compare Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, aph. 6.

11. *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 3, 79–80; *Reveries*, pp. 49–63 and 69–71 above; and *Emile*, Bloom edition, 105n.

12. See *Emile*, Bloom edition, 166–171, and *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 2, 6–7, 13, 20–22. Compare here the radical difference not only between Rousseau and the *Encyclopédistes*, but also between Rousseau and Socrates, Plato, or Aristotle on the status of philosophy for human well-being. See Plato, *Symposium*, 201d–212c; *Apology of Socrates*, 30a–b, 33b–d, 36b–e; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1166a20–25, 1177b27–1178a8, 1179a23–33.

13. This follows the punctuation of the manuscript, which differs from the Pléiade. The expression *Etre immense* also appears in the "Profession of Faith" (*Emile*, Bloom edition, 285) and seems to refer to Descartes' usage in *Meditations* III and IV, just as the preceding sentence refers to the mind–body distinction in Descartes' *Meditations* II and VI and in his *Discourse on Method*, IV.

14. Psalm XVIII.2 in the Vulgate edition, or XIX.1 in recent editions. Beginning with "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament announces the work of His hands," the psalm celebrates the creator of the heavens, the sun and the divine law.

15. The capitalization is in the manuscript, but not in the Pléiade.

16. On the interior assent, a leitmotif in Rousseau's writings, see *Dialogues*, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 1, 22, 214; *Reveries*, pp. 23 and 31 above; and compare with *Confessions* IX, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 5, 393. Concerning self-analysis, and not history, as the basis for discovering the natural sentiments, see *Confessions*, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 5, 5; *Dialogues*, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 1, 52–53 and 215, and *Reveries*, Fifth Walk, in comparison with *Reveries*, Third Walk, and the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" in *Emile*, Book IV.

17. On the *dictamen*, see *Reveries*, p. 31 above. Spinoza uses this term to designate an imperative of reason in the *Theological-Political Treatise*, ch. XVI, and in the *Ethics*, IV, Proposition XVIII, scholia and Proposition LXVII, demonstration.

18. See Aristotle, *Physics*, 239b5 and 263a5, on Zeno the Eleatic.

19. On the pyrrhonists, see *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 2, 6.

20. Rousseau alludes to Bishop Berkeley on this issue in the *First Discourse*, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 2, 20. See *Emile*, Bloom edition, 270, for the Vicar's critique of both idealism and materialism. The problem of refuting Berkeley is raised by Diderot in his *Lettre sur les Aveugles*, which induced Condillac to attempt to resolve it from the standpoint of materialism in his *Traité des Sensations*. As a work of genetic epistemology, Rousseau's *Emile* is in large part a response to the materialism of his friend Condillac, of Helvétius, and of early modern philosophy in general.

21. See Diderot, *Pensées Philosophiques*, sec. XXI. Diderot concludes, however, by saying, "I would well beware of making this argument to an atheist. . . . (T)he difficulty of the event is compensated more than enough by the multitude of throws." Rousseau's Vicar answers this point in *Emile*, Bloom edition, 276. Rousseau gives a more nuanced statement in the letter to Voltaire of August 18, 1756, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 3, 118. He also raises the issue in the "Morceau allégorique," Pléiade, IV, 1046.

22. In his edition of the "Letter to Franquières" in *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 321, Victor Gourevitch identifies Rousseau's allusion to the Epicurean view of the soul as made of atoms as referring to Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, III.161–257. The discussion there of heat to explain the soul bears comparison with not only Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode*, V, but also *Emile*, Bloom edition, 106 and 232. See Manuscrit Favre, Pléiade, IV, 219–220. Gourevitch also points out that the Modernist to whom Rousseau refers concerning organic molecules is Buffon. See Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, *Histoire Naturelle Générale et Particulière*, chs. 2–4.

23. Rousseau also discusses the problem of the origin of evil in the "Letter to Voltaire," *Collected Writings*, Vol. 3, 114–115. In the "Letter to Beaumont" he rejects the Christian doctrine of original sin as providing an adequate account. See Pléiade, IV, 935–938. Compare Descartes, *Meditations*, IV.

24. This is capitalized in the manuscript, but not in the Pléiade. The next occurrence of "author" is not capitalized in either.

25. On the natural experiences of suffering and death, see *Second Discourse*, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 3, 27–28; "Letter to Voltaire", *Collected Writings*, Vol. 3, 109–110; *Emile*, Bloom edition, 54.

26. See Voltaire, *Candide*, III.

27. François de Salignac de La Mothe-Fénelon (1651–1715), Archbishop of Cambrai and preceptor of the Duke of Burgundy, the grandson of Louis XIV and heir to the throne, had written *Les Aventures de Télémaque* for his royal pupil with a view to fundamental reforms of the monarchy. A critic of epicureanism and a disciple of Bossuet until their dispute over Quietism, Fénelon endured political disgrace as a result of his religious and political views. For Rousseau's appreciation of Fénelon, see *Dialogues*, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 1, 158; *Reveries*, p. 19 above, and *Julie*, II.xviii, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 6, 212, where he is described, with Catinat, as one of "the two greatest, the two most virtuous moderns." On Socrates and Cato, see *Discourse on Political Economy*, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 3, 151; *Discourse on the Virtue of the Hero*, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 4, 2 and 6; and the fragments comparing Socrates and Cato, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 4, 14–15. For a discussion of Rousseau's comparison of Socrates and Cato, see Christopher Kelly, *Rousseau's Exemplary Life: The "Confessions" as Political Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 50–75.

28. Rousseau's specific examination of this question begins with the *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* and continues through his epistolary exchanges with Voltaire, notably in Rousseau's Letter to Voltaire of 18 August 1756 and culminates with Rousseau's answer to Voltaire's *Candide* with the publication of *Emile* in 1762.

29. On the two principles, see Rousseau's remarks on Manichaeism in the *Lettre to Beaumont*, Pléiade, IV, 955–957, and compare these texts with Leibniz's animadversions on Pierre Bayle on the same point, or on Zoroaster, in the *Essais de Théodicée*, II, sec. 135, in the "Essays on the Justice of God and the Freedom of Man in the Origin of Evil." Compare Rousseau's criticism of Bayle at the end of "The Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar," in *Emile*, Bloom edition, 312–314.

30. The word here in French is "*pondérant*," deriving from the Latin "ponderare," which means to weigh, balance, or equilibrate. Giving Rousseau's text as the only example of the use of "pondérant," the Littré *Dictionnaire de la Langue*

Française suggests that Rousseau uses this word here to mean "important" or "decisive" and adds that "cela n'est pas usité." In fact, as is noted by the Littré, all other usages by Rousseau of variants of "pondérer" refer to weighing or equilibria. It seems that Rousseau has in mind the different premises of Franquières, as a disciple of Diderot, who would not normally give "weight" to Rousseau's sentiment. Here Rousseau is suggesting that despite the lack of weight Franquières would normally grant to Rousseau's sentiments, in this instance, considering Rousseau's fate and sufferings. Franquières might consider as weighty Rousseau's "optimistic" sensibility, or his happiness in spite of adversity.

31. Compare *Emile*, Bloom edition, 444–445, with "The Profession of Faith," where the Vicar obscures the distinction between virtue and goodness. See also *Dialogues*, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 1, 147–148, 157–159, and compare Aristotle's different argument in *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, VII, and X, on virtue and taking pleasure in the noble.

32. Rousseau uses the word *force*, translated here as "strength." The French term, however, draws attention to questions of natural philosophy, just as the idea of "virtue" in Rousseau points to questions of alienation from nature. For discussions of strength of soul in Rousseau, see *Discourse on the Virtue of a Hero*, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 4, 1–12; *Emile*, Bloom edition, 444–445; and "Final Reply," *Collected Writings*, Vol. 2, 111.

33. Racine's tragedy *Berenice*, discussed by Rousseau in the *Letter to d'Alembert*, portrays the conflict between the Roman Emperor Titus' love for the daughter of Herod and his duty as Emperor, compelling him to overcome his love for a foreigner. Lucius Junius Brutus, founder of the Roman Republic after the death of Lucretia and the expulsion of the Tarquins in 509 B.C.E., presided over the trial and execution of his own sons, who had conspired to restore the royal authority. See "Political Fragments," *Collected Writings*, Vol. 4, 38–39. Brutus and Titus are both discussed in the "Final Reply," *Collected Writings*, Vol. 2, 123. Rousseau's discussions should be compared with those of Machiavelli (*Discourses on Livy*, III.3) and St. Augustine (*City of God*, III.xvi, and V.xviii).

34. The infinitive *disputer*, which Rousseau uses here, has both an eristic and a poetic implication. In French medieval literature the *dispute* or *débat* is a metrical composition in dialogue form involving personifications and often dealing with religious themes. Consider Marivaux's *La Dispute* (1742) and its relation to Rousseau's play *Narcisse*, to which Rousseau alludes in *Confessions* VII, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 5, 241–242. The situation described here is reminiscent of Part II of *Julie* and Rousseau's unfinished play, *The Death of Lucretia*. As his remark immediately below suggests, it is also connected to his own love for Sophie d'Houdetot, described in Book IX of the *Confessions*. See, in particular, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 5, 368–381.

35. Genesis XXXIX, 12–20. Slave of Potiphar, who was eunuch to the Pharaoh and provost of the palace, Joseph fled Potiphar's wife when she sought to seduce him, and upon fleeing left his cloak. Infuriated at his rejection, Potiphar's wife accused Joseph of attempted rape and offered his cloak as proof, for which Joseph was punished by imprisonment.

36. This passage is a reference to Rousseau's dispute with Diderot concerning the problematic basis of morality. See *Collected Writings*, Vol. 3, 135–139, and Vol. 4, 76–82; also *Emile*, Bloom edition, 105n, 193, 235–236, 291, and 314.

37. See *Emile*, Bloom edition, 40, and *Reveries*, p. 51 above.

38. This passage occurs in Plato, *Republic*, II, 359b–362c, in a speech by Glaucon. See also 368b in relation to 330d–331d and 608c–621d. Socrates' later appeal in Book X to the hope for rewards after death conflicts with the task Glaucon had imposed on him in Book II, just as Rousseau's appeal to this hope in his religious writings conflicts with his portrait elsewhere of the happiness in this life of the natural man. But whereas Socrates' alternative appeal points to the *telos* of philosophy, Rousseau's alternative appeal betokens the sentiment of existence. Compare *Second Discourse*, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 3, 79–80; *Emile*, Bloom edition, 40 and 105n; *Reveries*, p. 55 above. See also *On Theatrical Imitation*, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 7, 337–350, where Rousseau considers the exchange between Socrates and Glaucon in *Republic* X in the context of the quarrel between philosophy and poetry.

39. Compare Rousseau's "Letter to Voltaire," *Collected Writings*, Vol. 3, 120, and 197, n. 44; *Emile*, Bloom edition, 292 and 314; and, for a different view, *Reveries*, p. 55 above.

40. Just as elsewhere Rousseau draws parallels between Socrates and Cato, his religious writings emphasize the parallel between Socrates and Jesus. Proceeding in this way, however, he transforms the classical tension between Jerusalem and Athens in the Western tradition and obscures these origins in favor of an idea of natural religion that, paradoxically, is consistent with the requirement of alienating the citizen from his nature. For another version of the parallel, see *Emile*, Bloom edition, 304–308.

41. In the manuscript Rousseau wrote "the first," but all editors agree that he clearly means Socrates.

42. These remarks warrant comparison with Rousseau's defense of the Jews against their persecutors in *Emile*, Bloom edition, 303. See the section of the "Political Fragments" called "About the Jews," *Collected Writings*, Vol. 4, 33–35.

43. In the *Social Contract*, IV.8, Rousseau examines the theological-political problem arising from this universalism. *Collected Writings*, Vol. 4, 216–224.

44. For Rousseau's account of the disciples and their role in the spread of Christianity, see "Observations by Jean-Jacques Rousseau of Geneva," *Collected Writings*, Vol. 2, 45.

45. See *Letters Written from the Mountain* III, Pléiade, Vol. III, 730–750. On "the true miracle" of the founding legislator's great soul, see *ibid.*, 727–728; the *Social Contract, First Version*, II.2, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 4, 103; and *Social Contract*, II.7, *Collected Writings*, Vol. 4, 157.

46. At the time he wrote this letter Rousseau had been suffering accutely for months from a severe stomach swelling as well as from a painful blockage of the urethra; he was being vigorously pursued by friends of Voltaire in a lawsuit for nonpayment of a large debt he firmly denied ever contracting; and he was forced to live clandestinely, under an assumed name, while under a warrant for arrest by the Parlement of Paris. See his correspondence with Du Peyrou, beginning with his letter of September 9, 1768, through his letter to Moultou of February 14, 1769. On his isolation, see *Reveries*, pp. 70–72, in relation to pp. 95–97 above.